

## York County Budget Committee Meeting May 22, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

**Committee Members present:** Paul Philbrick, Lisa Pratt, Marc Lessard, Rebecca Bowley, Jo-Ann Putnam, Susan Wiswell, Danica Briggs

### **ZOOM LINK:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81006785384?pwd=YlpPcXpaWTdnY2MxL1FWcEU4N3ZNUT09>

1. Introductions and Welcome: Jo-Ann Putnam, Chair  
Chair- JoAnn Putnam welcomes all.
  
2. Election of Budget Committee Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary  
*(Please note: Kathy Dumont, Administrative Assistant to the County Manager has offered to continue as the Committee Secretary.)*  
Marc Lessard nominated Jo-Ann Putnam for Budget Committee Chairperson and Lisa Pratt seconded the motion. Vote-unanimous.  
JoAnn Putnam nominated Marc Lessard for Budget Committee Vice-Chairperson. Susan Wiswell seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.  
Paul Philbrick was nominated as secretary. Susan Wiswell seconded the motion. Vote 5-0.  
Becky Bowley arrived at the meeting.
  
3. Begin Review of FY'24 proposed budget, Greg Zinser, County Manager (Q&A)  
County Manager Greg Zinser introduced himself and thanked the members for being on the Board.  
He instructed all to turn to the SUMMARY page of the budget that shows a request for a 5% increase over the prior year's budget.  
The County Manager explained that there is a slight increase in probate revenues, while a slight decrease in deeds revenues. He added that there are a lot less recordings.  
Expenditures show a 5% increase, stated County Manager Zinser.  
He explained that new items are separately tabbed in new requests.  
Marc Lessard asked if the new requests are in the overall budget? The County Manager responded that they are already taken into account.  
TAX ASSEMENT- Count Manager Zinser informed all that the assessment is under LD1 by \$334,000. Tax assessments are shown by town.  
County Manager Zinser explained that the historical state valuations are shown, and those numbers are which we base our budget (\$46 million here in the county).  
  
County Manager Zinser informed the Committee of a couple of notable items. The first he explained is that he is projecting a 4% COLA for the majority of individuals.

He added that this is an average. York County is a highly union environment with compounding pay scales. Some may be getting more depending on where they are in the pay scale.

Marc Lessard asked if this is based upon merit?

County Manager Zinser replied it depends on where they are on the scale. One of our unions has a 3% COLA but when you compound out with their step raise it is 4 ½%. Chair Jo-Ann Putnam asked what percentage the non-union- employees were getting for COLA. County Manager Zinser responded, 4% and that non- union do not have a pay scale, so no compounding occurs like it does in the unions.

Paul Philbrick questioned the change in insurances, specifically worker's compensation and long and short-term disability.

County Manager Greg Zinser explained that it is formula based and showed the Budget Committee the bill. He stated that it is based on wages and claims. The County Manager further stated that the cost included when we were running the Vaccinee Clinic and had to bring on extra employees.

JoAnn Putnam asked if we are on track to make what's on the budget for deeds recording?

County Manager Zinser responded, no and that he is predicting a \$200,000 to \$300,000 shortfall.

JoAnn Putnam pointed out that the county budget reflects utilizing the reserves by \$110,000 more.

County Manager Zinser replied that York County has \$7 million in reserves.

Fourteen years ago we were at about \$2 million. That is why we do not take from our fund balance, he explained.

JoAnn Putnam asked about probate revenues. County Manager Zinser replied that we have brought in more than budgeted the past couple of years.

He continued that there is a much higher need with more work going on in Probate.

JoAnn Putnam asked is this due to a larger workload or an increase in fees?

County Manager Zinser explained fees because of a larger workload. The probate code was changed and due processes were implemented. There are a greater number of filings.

County Manager Zinser distributed year-to-date reports to the Committee. He informed all that this document shows the decline in revenues (deeds). County Manager Zinser stated that we will probably not end the year with much (excess funds) at all.

- a. Review department budgets with department leaders-  
PROBATE -Register of Probate Carol Lovejoy addressed the Budget Committee and explained that her department deals with wills and people who die without one, adoptions, conservatorships, guardianships, name changes as well as some trusts. She informed all that their projected revenues from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 were \$530,000 and that they are a little bit over that so they increased it for this year.

She continued that she has asked for a new position in the Probate office. 18C changed a lot of our processes and requires a lot of reporting. Registrar of Probate Lovejoy stated that her office also processes passport applications. She continued that they have seen a huge increase in passport application processing as the Biddeford Post Office stopped doing them.

Register of Probate Lovejoy explained that she has asked for new, f/t employee in January of 2024 that will be a paralegal position. This position will pretty much be the Judge's assistant and take away some work from other employees, she explained. Register of Probate Lovejoy continued that the Probate department staff consists of several long-term employees who have a lot of built up paid time off so when they're on vacation the workload builds up. We now have space for a new employee.

JoAnn Putnam asked Ms. Lovejoy if her employees totaled 8, including the judge? She replied, yes.

Register of Probate Lovejoy informed all that the professional service line includes Guardian ad litem and attorneys.

Marc Lessard asked if it is correct that this budget shows an 11.5-12% increase? County Manager Zinser explained that this increase also included two reclassified employees due to paralegal issues. He continued that it depends on when the reclassification process is completed and that the bargaining agreement dictates how it is done.

DEEDS- Register of Deeds Nancy Hammond addressed the Committee and explained that the downturn in revenue is based on the sale of real estate. In the past, the department has been able to bring in a surplus and this year we will not be able to. We have empty positions that we will not fill this year, explained Register of Deeds Hammond. She continued that some expenses in her budget increased including technology. Even though sale prices are a huge part we also have the flip side of foreclosures, she explained. She added that this is always an unknown.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY – District Attorney Kathy Slattery told the Committee that most of their focus has been moving into one from four offices. We lose some efficiencies by not being in the courthouse but being all together helps. D.A. Slattery informed all that they had 7,201 cases, VW services - 27,414 documented victim contacts in 2022. They collected \$207,000 in restitution to crime victims. D.A. Slattery added that her department continues to make referrals to Layman Way. Scheduling of court cases is current and there is no longer a back log. District Attorney Slattery stated that she thinks most of her budget changes are move-related. We are not looking for more people, just trying to fill the openings we have.

The County Manager explained that we handle the rent of Graham Street from our contingencies right now in the amount of \$68,000 to \$70,000. He added that we are working with the owner to perhaps take over the building. Rental on a budget line is also for a very small room at the new courthouse.

Paul Philbrick questioned why overtime for the District Attorney's office is \$27,000 in the hole. County Manager Zinser explained that the year-to-date report covers 7-1-22 to current so this reflects when the vaccine center was opened and we offered all our employees that wanted to, overtime to work over there. Those wages are ultimately reimbursable and show up under the revenue.

Layman Way Recovery Center- County Manager Zinser explained that this facility is a 24-bed residential recovery center for those suffering from substance abuse. Primary way people get into this program is through the bail process in the D.A.

D. A. Kathy Slattery shared the following statistics- 379 people screened, 100 graduated, 57 referrals of which nineteen were accepted. She explained possible reasons for denial into the program are severity of the crime and being unwilling to engage in the program. This is a great program for the county and the recidivism is low.

Marc Lessard questioned the 9.38% increase.

County Manager Zinser explained this is a contract renewal. They haven't asked for an increase in the past couple of years.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE- County Manager Zinser explained that Sheriff King will present both the Patrol and Jail budgets- Sheriff King explained that 14 towns in York County do not have a police department. York County Sheriff's Office has a clearance rate that hovers around 30% or more. Sheriff King continued that this is a fairly flat budget. The big standout is books and periodicals and that line went up as it has been underfunded.

Minor equipment went down but maintenance and telephone lines went up. Our mechanic was out for several months so we did have to go outside for vehicle maintenance and repairs, explained Sheriff King.

Marc Lessard questioned the 50.77% increase in wages.

Sheriff King explained that a Major's position was approved by you (Budget Committee) last year and they just hired the new major.

JoAnn Putnam asked the Sheriff if he was utilizing First Net for his telephones as it saves her police department a lot of money.

Sheriff King replied that he has a meeting with them but that his concern is some of the areas have no cell coverage.

Rebecca Bowley questioned the employee training and development line being \$58,000 over?

Sheriff King responded that this budget is typically underfunded for a number of years. We had some training opportunities this year, he explained.

Susan Wiswell questioned the electronic equipment repair line being over by 359% ? but you are not asking for extra.

The County Manager replied that he thought that was just a one time thing.

County Manager Zinser explained that two vehicles also need to be journaled out to towns.

Jo-Ann Putnam asked will the Sheriff end up within his budget?

Sheriff King replied that he will.

JAIL- County Manager Zinser explained that it costs slightly over \$12 million to operate the jail. We are only responsible for raising \$9.5 million and the remainder should come from the State. \$20 million is the total amount the State gives out for all of the counties but this does not include any cost of living. The State contribution is fixed. \$9.5 million is the tax cap.

ADP (average daily population) is about 230 residents, Sheriff King says.

Sheriff King explained that York County's jail is the second largest jail in the State. 296 residents can be there. Sheriff King commented that the important thing to mention is that we have been full service for a number of months. Two units are closed to save money. He added that we are working with Cumberland County to house residents and still struggle with staffing.

Sheriff King informed the Committee that York County jail has the largest medical assisted treatment program in the State.

Jo-Ann Putnam questioned the increase in MEPERS?

County Manager Zinser replied that new employees are opting to sign up and before they did not.

Marc Lessard stated that it is good to identify that we have more people opting in for MEPERS. These folks may stay with us for a longer term. This impacts vacation schedules and potentially affects wage grade mix that you have.

Jo-Ann Putnam questioned the increase in pretrial services?

County Manager Zinser explained that last year in July or August we added a new caseworker. This is a benefit for us as Maine Pre-trial gets people out of jail.

Jo-Ann Putnam asked about the increase in the inmate medical budget line.

County Manager Zinser responded that is a contractual increase.

Paul Philbrick told the Sheriff that he had done a good job holding his budget increase to 5%

The County Manager replied that all department leaders pay attention to their budgets and no one comes in with a big wish list. This is probably the second time in twelve years that we have asked for this many people.

EMA- EMA Director Art Cleaves explained to the Committee that EMA coordinates pre and post disaster exercises for your communities. He continued that the EMA budget is calling for a 5.64% increase. Director Cleaves pointed out that EMA has recouped a good amount of funding. They received an EMA performance grant in the amount of \$264,000 and a Homeland Security grant in the amount of \$300,000 that can be shared with communities.

Director Cleaves continued that they were able to recoup \$5.4 million of COVID money for the county.

JoAnn Putnam asked if the overage in general wages is part of staffing for the clinic?

EMA Director Cleaves replied, yes, and this money has been spent and will be reimbursed.

County Manager Zinser replied this should be the last year the budget reflects COVID impacts.

JUVENILE FIRE PREVENTION- County Manager Zinser explained that this is a program used by your fire departments for juveniles. We are trying to find individuals to fill those positions.

EMA Director Art Cleaves added that they have one fire instructor who is helping with that.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE- Facilities Manager Rick deRochemont reviewed his budget with the Committee. He explained that his professional services line covers pest control, elevator inspections, fire extinguishers, etc., He added that his budget line for gas is increased due to the new District Attorney's new building being 12 miles away.

b. County Manager to review remaining budgets

COMMISSIONERS- The Committee had no questions on this budget.

NEW REQUESTS- Marc Lessard commented that one of our biggest concerns in the city of Biddeford is the unhoused. He told all that the Biddeford City Council spoke to an entity based in Texas to help Biddeford out with this issue. The cost is \$25,000 for them to help us review the homeless situation in our city. Mr. Lessard stated that he believes this is a county issue. He continued that in any city that addresses the homeless situation, you will be the focal point of where to go. Either we are all in it to help each other or individually or it will have negative impacts. He asked if we maybe get this company to do recommendations for all York County towns and cities?

County Manager Zinser replied that this is a question that has been discussed with city and town managers. The conversation centers more around the workforce issue, he explained.

County Manager Zinser continued that the homelessness issue is here and not going away. The Budget Committee has the authority to add anything in the budget and then it goes back to the Commissioners.

My only concern about the homeless issue is we are already investing our funds into recovery (a 58-bed center).

Marc Lessard replied that he thinks that is a great idea and that he is happy to have that conversation to move that forward. He continued that it is a complicated issue. County Manager Zinser stated that there are fourteen towns that don't have direct contact so the outreach would have to be before the Board. County Manager Zinser stated that you would have to do the \$100,000 into the budget or have the sole source conversation with the Commissioners. The larger issue continued the County Manger is making sure that coalition is formed. I can have those conversations with as many parties as I reasonably can, he stated. Discussion of the best way to proceed occurred with Marc Lessard suggesting a motion be made to add a \$100,000 line item into the budget for a party to do research and help us to do research on unhoused issues.

Jo-Ann Putnam asked Marc Lessard if when you put this out, did you ask any of the other towns if they were interested?

Marc Lessard replied that this matter was something we identified on our 3-to-5-year plan and no they did not.

Marc Lessard suggested procedurally the funds should be put in contingency.

County Manager Zinser responded that we can't, but this is really a public health issue and that Layman Way is really public health. It could fall under that as a logical landing place for that money.

Lisa Pratt asked what are the results and what do they provide?

Marc Lessard replied that they provide each town a blueprint of how to handle this issue. Eventually, this issue will affect everybody. He compared this matter with Layman Way Recovery Center. Six years ago we were asked to approve funding for this center and at the time it was a leap of faith to go in that direction.

Lisa Pratt asked do they provide suggestions for towns on how to handle this?

Marc Lessard responded, yes. Commissioners would then review the programs and then move it in to the direction that works for each city and town.

County Manager Zinser asked what level of staff involvement would there be? Would a part-time coordinator need to be hired?

Marc Lessard stated that we are now drilling lower where the Commissioners will build the RFQ. Our presentation was based just upon our city.

County Manager Zinser recommended adding money for a staff person.

Marc Lessard stated that it will take the Commissioners three to four months to dig in and make a decision then we are into October and then six months to deliver so it would make sense for the budget process for next year to put the dollars in that you are asking for.

County Manager Zinser asked if the report is here in April, don't you want someone to get out to the towns?

Lisa Pratt agreed and added that you will want someone on staff to answer questions.

Becky Bowley commented that she comes from a small municipality. She urged all to talk to their General Assistance person. Hollis's budget will probably double this year because of this situation.

Susan Wiswell stated that she would be more comfortable talking to her town's general assistance person in Kittery before she votes on any of this sort of thing. Our taxes are already outrageous. She asked if there was any chance of grant funding?

Marc Lessard stated that everyone who has been at the budget committee meetings knows he is not an advocate of adding to this budget. He is a conservative, he stated but added that this matter is something we have to deal with before it explodes.

Marc Lessard reminded all that just because we allocate money, it doesn't mean that the Commissioners actually spend it. They have work to do knowing that we feel this is something the towns and cities really need.

Jo-Ann Putnam asked if it was appropriate to ask the Commissioners during this meeting what their thoughts are.

County Manager Zinser responded that while there are three Commissioners here, your best bet would be if you vote it in and if you approve it, it goes on the next agenda and they (Commissioners) would have to approve it. He continued

that he would then invite the budget committee members and have them via ZOOM and explain why you did what you did.

Lisa Pratt asked if we were to fund the staff member would it go to Layman Way? Is there a staff person there that could take this on?

County Manager Zinser responded, no. He added that he is not really interested in working with other non-profits. He would rather have a government employee.

Jo-Ann Putnam asked what number would that be?

County Manager Zinser replied that one staff member for 6 months, part time would be around \$25,000.

Marc Lessard recommended putting \$125,000 as a line item and then it is up to the County Commissioners to review it and this way dollars are allocated to get it done.

Marc Lessard motioned to add \$125,000 to the Layman Way Recovery Center budget line for a public health county study on unhousing and help with such situations in all York County cities and towns as well as staff resources to assist.

Becky Bowley seconded the motion.

Vote 6- 1 with Susan Wiswell opposed. Motion passed.

**NEW REQUESTS-** Becky Bowley asked why so many people get hired in October.

County Manager Zinser responded to assist in the impact on the budget (spread it out).

**ADMINISTRATION-**

Mark Lessard asked about the 21.58% increase on the management salary line.

County Manager Zinser replied this is largely due to the H.R. Manager new position the the Budget Committee approved last year under new requests. This was moved this year under the regular budget.

**TREASURER-** County Manager Zinser informed all that this is a ceremonial position in the county.

**COMMUNICATIONS-** County Manager Zinser explained that this is contractual increase from Sanford Communications.

**RETIREMENT benefits-** County Manager Zinser explained that this is a function of wages. MEPERS rates went up, he added.

Becky Bowley asked who is the plan with and do you go out to bid?

County Manager Zinser replied that we are rated individually. Our claims history is really good (80%). What is not good is that we have the high deductible plan and are undervalued. Therefore, our increase should have been more.

We are anticipating about a 5% increase.

The County Manager added that it is a different story for the jail.

PUBLIC AGENCIES- County Manager Zinser explained that the York County Extension reduced its request and Southern Maine Regional Planning Commissioner increased its request. We are required to contribute to YC Soil and Water and York County Extension.

JoAnn Putnam asked the Committee if they have any questions on any of the budgets.

County Manager Zinser informed the Committee that he will put the unhousing study on the June 7<sup>th</sup> Commissioners' meeting agenda. He encouraged all of you who sit on the Boards to let your members know about this item.

Budget Committee Member Lisa Pratt asked the County Manager if he had a three-to-five-year plan for positions?

County Manager Zinser replied they have a concept of operations for the Recovery Center and Training Center that include detailed staffing plans.

4. **Vote on Budget**  
Lisa Pratt motioned to approve the 'FY2024 budget in the amount of \$23,435,504.00. Marc Lessard seconded the motion. Vote -7-0.
5. **Set Public Hearing Date and Time**  
The public hearing date was set for Monday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m. in the York County EMA Training Center.
6. **Public Comment**
7. **Adjournment**  
Jo-Ann Putnam motioned to adjourn. Marc Lessard seconded the motion. Vote unanimous. Meeting ended at 5:35 p.m.